

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 198375

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E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: CGEN, SCUL, UR, US (WHITNEY, CRAIG; PIPER, HAROLD)

SUBJECT:CORRESPONDENTS CASE

REF: MOSCOW 18174

1. THE DEPARTMENT AND WHITE HOUSE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING HOW TO PROCEED IN RESPONSE TO THE WHITNEY AND PIPER CASES. WHILE THE SOVIETS DO NOT SEEM TO BE MOVING TO EXPEL THE TWO CORRESPONDENTS, REVOKE THEIR CREDENTIALS OR INITIATE CRIMINAL CHARGES, WE ARE FACED WITH THE PROSPECTS OF A LONG DRAWN-OUT PERIOD OF SUCCESSIVE FINES, LEAVING THE AMERICAN MOSCOW PRESS CORPS IN A STATE OF SUSPENSE AND UNCERTAINTY.

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2. WE PLAN HIGH-LEVEL DEMARCHES EARLY NEXT WEEK IN MOSCOW AND UASHINGTON IN AN EFFORT TO END THE WHITNEY AND PIPER CASES UHERE THEY NOW STAND, AND IF WE ARE NOT IMMEDIATELY SUCCESSFUL WE WILL PROBABLY DECLINE TO RENEW A FEW WHITE HOUSE AND STATE DEPARTMENT ACCREDITATIONS OF SOVIET CORRESPONDENTS, AND PERHAPS LOOK FOR WAYS TO CURTAIL THE ACCESS OF STATE RADIO AND TV BECAUSE OF THEIR ORGANIZATION'S ROLE

IN THE MOSCOW SLANDER CASE.

3. PLEASE APPROACH MFA AT A HIGH LEVEL, AUG 7 IF POSSIBLE,
ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

A. AS THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT IS SURELY AWARE, WE VIEW THE
WHITNEY AND PIPER CASES WITH GRAVE CONCERN, AND CONSIDER THE
SLANDER CASES AGAINST THEM AS AN EFFORT TO INHIBIT AMER-
ICAN REPORTERS IN VIOLATION OF THE UNDERTAKINGS OF THE CSCE.

B. THE JUDGMENTS HAVE NOW BEEN RENDERED AND FINES AND
COURT COSTS HAVE BEEN PAID. THE NEWSPAPERS HAVE QUITE
RIGHTLY REFUSED TO PRINT RETRACTIONS.

C. WE WANT TO END THIS MATTER AND WE HOPE THE SOVIET
GOVERNMENT SHARES THAT DESIRE. WE DO NOT WANT THE CASES
DRAGGING ON, LEAVING THE CORRESPONDENTS AND THE AMERICAN
SIDE SUBJECT TO HARASSMENT AND UNEASE.

D. THERE ARE A WHOLE SERIES OF CURRENT PROBLEMS IN OUR
BILATERAL RELATIONS WHICH ARE HAVING A SERIOUS DETRIMENTAL
IMPACT. WE NEED TO GET THESE OUT OF THE WAY. THE CORRES-
PONDENTS CASE IS ONE WE BELIEVE THE SOVIETS COULD EASILY
DISPOSE OF.

E. IN SPITE OF THE ASSYMETRY IN NUMBERS OF CORRESPONDENTS
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IN THE TWO COUNTRIES, WE HAVE RESISTED CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE
TO TAKE STERN MEASURES AGAINST SOVIET CORRESPONDENTS IN THE
UNITED STATES IN RETALIATION. WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE SOVIET
GOVERNMENT WOULD APPRECIATE THIS RESTRAINT AND JOIN IN AN
EFFORT TO PUT THIS MATTER TO REST.

4. FYI WE DO NOT RPT NOT PLAN TO INFORM THE BALTIMORE SUN
OR NEW YORK TIMES OF THE ABOVE MOSCOW AND PARALLEL WASHING-
TON DEMARCHES, AND WE HOPE TO AVOID PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF OUR
EFFORTS TO GET THE PIPER AND WHITNEY CASES BEHIND US.

CHRISTOPHER

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